



Mission San Juan Capistrano to Mark its 250th Anniversary in 2026 with Year-Long Celebrations

San Juan Capistrano, Calif. (January 23, 2026) - Mission San Juan Capistrano is preparing for its 250th milestone with a series exhibits and events beginning in January 2026 with a community-wide birthday celebration on November 1, 2026. Founded on November 1, 1776 by Saint Junipero Serra, Mission San Juan Capistrano is one of nine original California missions and the sole Mission whose origination date coincides with our nation's birthyear.

Throughout 2026, Mission San Juan will debut an artifact of the month program, new exhibits, lectures, a community art show and an incredible lighted storytelling experience, *The Story of the Mission: A Legacy of Builders, Faith and Time*. Other 250th events include a food and wine festival on October 10 and a major birthday celebration on November 1.

Known as the birthplace of Orange County, Mission San Juan Capistrano historic landmark and museum, was the seventh of 21 missions statewide and features a chapel where Saint Serra once celebrated Mass which is still in use. The "Jewel of the Missions" is a monument to California's multi-cultural history embracing its Native American, Spanish, Mexican and European heritage, the Mission welcomes over 300,000 visitors each year.

"It's remarkable to think that after 250 years, Mission San Juan Capistrano continues to be a vibrant place of living history, education, and worship. We are thrilled to celebrate the landmark's semi quinentennial next year alongside our country's birthyear and invite the community to visit our events and exhibits throughout the year. Now, more than ever, Mission San Juan Capistrano belongs to the world and welcomes everyone home as it has for 250 years, proudly as a place of inspiration, education, and preservation. Viva La Mission!" says Mission San Juan Capistrano Executive Director Mechelle Lawrence Adams.

The City of San Juan Capistrano is concurrently planning activities in 2026 coordinated by a 250th committee sponsored by the San Juan Capistrano Historical Society and comprised of key community leaders including the Juaneño Band of Mission Indians, Acjachemen Nation.

Tribal Chairman, Nathan K. Banda of the Juaneño Band of Mission Indians, Acjachemen Nation, says, “We stand alongside Mission San Juan Capistrano as it commemorates its 250th anniversary. Our ancestors were the builders of this Mission, and we honor their enduring legacy—along with the generations who have followed—whose spirit, resilience, and history continue to live on in this sacred place.”

Throughout 2026, Mission San Juan Capistrano invites individuals to celebrate their own birthdays with free admission and a custom “It’s My Birthday Too” birthday button. As part of the city-wide promotion, the Mission is leading efforts for nearly 100 250th celebratory banners on city light poles from January through November 2026.

Visit the Mission’s [website](#) in the coming weeks for additional information and the opportunity to sign up for ongoing 250th celebration updates.

About Mission San Juan Capistrano

Known as the “Jewel of the Missions,” Mission San Juan Capistrano is a historic landmark and museum that features permanent exhibits with original artifacts as well as traveling and temporary exhibits. Orange County’s only Mission, the site is home to Serra Chapel, The Great Stone Church and the original padres’ quarters of the South Wing and promotes faith, education, preservation and cultural event programming.

Founded on November 1, 1776, by Saint Junipero Serra as the seventh of 21 California missions established by Spain, Mission San Juan Capistrano is owned by the Diocese of Orange and receives no church or state funding. The Mission Preservation Foundation, comprised of business and community leaders, is its fundraising entity committed to ensuring education, preservation and its long-term historic and religious significance.

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